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In memoriam – Yuri Aleksandrovicz POPOV

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On 16th November 2016, Yuri Alexandrovich POPOV, the world-renowned palaeontologist passed away. His specialisms were the morphology, taxonomy and phylogeny of insects, particularly Heteroptera and Coleorrhyncha. His work was devoted to both modern and fossil insects.

Yuri Alexandrovich POPOV was born in Moscow, Russia, on 5th March, 1936. In 1959 he graduated from Moscow State University, Faculty of Biology, Chair of Entomology. After 1959 Yuri worked at the Palaeontological Institute of the Russian (formerly Soviet) Academy of Sciences (RAS) in the Arthropod Laboratory, holding the posts of senior technical worker, junior research worker (1961-1971), secretary of the international scientific connection in the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1971-1975), and senior research worker (since 1981). He was Professor (Senior Scientific Research) and Curator at the Zoological Museum of Moscow State University, with the Heteroptera suborder as his main field .

His cooperation with Polish scientists began in 1964 when he met the well-known Polish entomologist, Professor Sędzimir Maciej KLIMASZEWSKI, who was at that time visiting the Laboratory of Arthropods of the Palaeontological Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences. As a result of their lively discussions and ever closer cooperation, both specialists in hemipteran insects became good friends and remained so until Professor KLIMASZEWSKI's death. In 1969 Yuri spent six months at the Zoological Institute of Warsaw working on the systematics and morphology of water bugs of the Institute's collection. That visit was part of the inter-academic agreement between the Polish

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Aleksander HERCZEK, Piotr WĘGIEREK and Yuri POPOV. The 5th International Conference of Fossil Insects in China (Beijing, 2010)

Academy of Sciences and the USSR Academy of Sciences. Professor Tadeusz JACZEWSKI, an eminent hemipterologist, who had a significant influence on systematic and morphological views regarding water bugs of the Nepomorpha infra-order, helped Yuri in the study of this group of insects. During that first visit he also made the acquaintance of Professor Henryk SZELEGIEWICZ, a well-known specialist in Aphidoidea (Hemiptera). The next visit was to Lublin University at the invitation of Professor KLIMASZEWSKI, who showed Yuri how his Laboratory was run.

The 1970s and 1980s were a period of Yuri's intense research on Mesozoic hemipteran fauna and the phylogeny of their groups. At that time his first publications appeared on bugs from Baltic (POPOV 1978, CARVALHO & POPOV 1984) and Dominican (POPOV 1987, 1989) amber. That new interest in the Heteroptera in Eocene Baltic amber led Yuri in early 1980 to the Museum of the Earth of the Polish Academy of Sciences with its extensive collection of such amber. There he established close scientific and friendly contacts with the curators of this collection, Professor Barbara KOSMOWSKA-CERANOWICZ and Dr Róża KULICKA. These contacts and friendship continued until his death. The early 1990s were the start of Yuri's "amber period", which continued until his death. His publications from

that time yielded information on new taxa of Heteroptera preserved in the world's amber. He wrote the majority of articles in collaboration with colleagues: A. HERCZEK (Miridae, Anthocoridae and Microphysidae), V.B. GOLUB (Tingidae) and P.V. PUTSHKOV (Reduviidae). It was during this period that Yuri's long-term, close and productive collaboration with the Department of Zoology and mainly with Professor Aleksander HERCZEK (Silesian University, Katowice) began.

For many years Yuri received invaluable assistance in studying fossil material (both amber and stone remains) from the world-famous hemipterologist Professor Jan KOTEJA (Kraków), a good friend and colleague of the Russian palaeontologists from the RAS Laboratory of Arthropods. Close collaboration also continued for many years with colleagues from Kraków, Professor Wiesław KRZEMIŃSKI and Professor Ewa KRZEMIŃSKA (the Institute of Systematics and Evolution of Animals, PAS, Kraków). The collection of materials from the Museum and the Arthropod Laboratory were jointly used in some publications.

In the taxonomic field he was the author of three new heteropteran infraorders (Nepomorpha, Gerromorpha and Leptopodomorpha), 8 families, 12 subfamilies, 15 tribes, over 100 genera and nearly 200 fossil and recent species. He published more than 150 articles and book chapters on the above groups, as well as a monograph on water bugs.

In the last twenty years Yuri regularly participated in the cyclic international meetings ("Amberif") in Gdańsk, where specialists in organic remains (mainly insects) in Baltic amber meet, sell and identify the contents of inclusions as well as hold scientific seminars given over to amber. These are followed by publications in special issues of the journal of the Museum of Gdańsk University (Prof. Ryszard SZADIEWSKI and Dr Elżbieta SONTAG) and the Museum of the Earth (Prof. Barbara KOSMOWSKA-CERANOWICZ) "Bursztynisko".

The period of collaboration with Polish scientists bore fruit in the form of some fifty co-authored publications, which significantly contributed to Yuri's achievements.

There is no doubt that in saying our final farewell to Yuri the worldwide community of entomologists has lost an eminent specialist, a charming companion and a friendly colleague. He will always remain in our memories.

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